

#### Members

Sen. Sue Landske, Chair  
Sen. Ron Alting  
Sen. Joseph Zakas  
Sen. Earline Rogers  
Sen. William Alexa  
Sen. Rose Ann Antich  
Rep. Charlie Brown  
Rep. Dan Stevenson  
Rep. Linda Lawson  
Rep. Ralph Ayres  
Rep. Dan Dumezich  
Rep. Dean Mock  
Mayor Duane Dedelow  
Mayor James Perron



# NORTHWEST INDIANA TRANSPORTATION STUDY COMMISSION

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Authority: P.L. 149-1999

## MEETING MINUTES<sup>1</sup>

**Meeting Date:** August 2, 2000  
**Meeting Time:** 10:30 A.M.  
**Meeting Place:** NICTD Offices 33 E. U.S. Highway 12,  
Conference Room  
**Meeting City:** Chesterton, Indiana  
**Meeting Number:** 1

**Members Present:** Sen. Sue Landske, Chair; Sen. Joseph Zakas; Sen. Earline Rogers;  
Sen. Rose Ann Antich; Rep. Dan Stevenson; Rep. Ralph Ayres.

**Members Absent:** Sen. Ron Alting; Sen. William Alexa; Rep. Charlie Brown; Rep. Linda  
Lawson; Rep. Dan Dumezich; Rep. Dean Mock; Mayor Duane  
Dedelow; Mayor James Perron.

The Chair, Senator Sue Landske, called the meeting to order at 10:45 a.m. Senator Landske said that because they lacked a quorum, the Commission could not vote on or take official action on the issues at today's meeting. Senator Landske said that the Commission would hear testimony on today's agenda. The Chair then introduced the Commission members and staff.

Senator Landske then recognized Roger Sims, President of the Indiana High Speed Rail Association (IHSRA).

### **1) Roger Sims, President of the Indiana High Speed Rail Association**

In his opening remarks, Mr. Sims discussed the Midwest Regional Rail Initiative. Mr. Sims said that this program is an on-going effort to develop an improved and expanded passenger rail system in the Midwest. Mr. Sims told the Commission that the sponsors of the Midwest Regional Rail Initiative are: AMTRAK, the Federal Railroad Administration and the transportation agencies of nine Midwest states - Illinois Dept. of Transportation; Indiana Dept. of Transportation; Iowa Dept. of Transportation; Michigan Dept. of Transportation; Minnesota Dept. of Transportation; Missouri Dept. of Transportation; Nebraska Dept. of Roads; Ohio Rail

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<sup>1</sup> Exhibits and other materials referenced in these minutes can be inspected and copied in the Legislative Information Center in Room 230 of the State House in Indianapolis, Indiana. Requests for copies may be mailed to the Legislative Information Center, Legislative Services Agency, 200 West Washington Street, Indianapolis, IN 46204-2789. A fee of \$0.15 per page and mailing costs will be charged for copies. These minutes are also available on the Internet at the General Assembly homepage. The URL address of the General Assembly homepage is <http://www.ai.org/legislative/>. No fee is charged for viewing, downloading, or printing minutes from the Internet.

Development Commission; and the Wisconsin Dept. of Transportation.

Mr. Sims then said that the major elements of the Midwest Regional Rail System (MWRRS) are: 1) use of 3,000 miles of existing rail rights-of-way to connect rural, small urban, and major metropolitan areas; 2) operation of a “hub-and-spoke” passenger rail system providing through-service in Chicago to locations throughout the Midwest; 3) introduction of modern train equipment operating at speeds up to 110 mph; 4) provision of multi-modal connections to improve system access; and 5) improvement in reliability and on-time performance.

Mr. Sims then described the potential routes to be used for the high-speed rail. For Indiana, they are: Chicago to Indianapolis and Indianapolis to Cincinnati. Mr. Sims made available a document entitled: *Midwest Rail System: A Transportation Network for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*. This document identifies the opportunities of the MWRRS, capital costs associated with the development of high speed rail, needed infrastructure improvements, and the benefits associated with infrastructure improvements. In addition, it identifies the required capital investment and how it might be financed. Mr. Sims said that the capital improvement program is estimated to cost \$4.1 billion (in 1998 dollars) and is spread over ten years. Mr. Sims also told the Commission that the report contained the proposed implementation schedule which reflects a ten-year phasing in of the MWRRS corridor segments. When asked who would pay for the funding, Mr. Sims said that federal funding will be the primary source of funding.

Senator Landske next recognized Larry Goode, Division Chief of the Intermodal Division of the Indiana Department of Transportation (INDOT).

## **2) Larry Goode, Indiana Department of Transportation**

In his presentation, Mr. Goode addressed the issue of high speed rail development in Indiana. Mr. Goode distributed a document entitled *Indiana Department of Transportation-High Speed Rail Development-Continuing Efforts*. Mr. Goode told the Commission that the INDOT is working on refinement of routing and implementation issues regarding the Midwest Rail Initiative. In addition, Mr. Goode said that preliminary engineering and environmental impacts are also being addressed. Mr. Goode also told the Commission that the preliminary engineering is underway for the Chicago to Cincinnati route. Further, Mr. Goode also noted that the Indiana Passenger Rail Study has been completed. In this study, the INDOT examined additional rail corridors not part of the MWRRS. He said that this study helped prioritize future needs.

Continuing, Mr. Goode told the Commission that the INDOT is undertaking issue specific studies addressing possible alternative routes. These studies are: a) South of Lake Michigan Re-route Study; b) Gary Alternative Routing Study; c) Northern Indiana/Ohio Routing Study. The South of the Lake route would be a passenger-only route. Mr. Goode said that this route would relieve congestion with freight. This route is owned and operated by Amtrak. For the Gary Alternative Routing Study, (Lafayette, IN, to Chicago via the Gary Airport), three routes were studied. For the Northern Indiana/Ohio Routing Study, Mr. Goode told the Commission that there is current Amtrak service, but expected costs would be very high and that new track is suggested. An alternative to the northern route, Mr. Goode commented, is a southern route through Ft. Wayne. The advantages, according to Mr. Goode, are that the route is less used, involves less cost, and because of a greater population, increased ridership is anticipated.

Mr. Goode told the Commission that the INDOT is applying to the Federal Railroad Administration for High Speed Rail Corridor designation from Louisville, KY, to Indianapolis. Mr. Goode said that this designation would extend the *Kentucky Cardinal* train from Jeffersonville, IN, to Louisville and it reintroduces daily coach and sleeper car service.

Mr. Goode informed the Commission of the status of federal high speed rail legislation. He said

that there are two bills in Congress. One is Senate Bill 1900 introduced by Senator Frank Lautenberg of New Jersey which has 50 co-sponsors, including Senators Lugar and Bayh. This Amtrak funding bill calls for \$10 billion over ten years and bonding authority, with 95% spent on High Speed Rail. Mr. Goode said that a companion bill has been introduced in the House. House Bill 3700 has 100 supporters to date.

Senator Landske next recognized Jerry Hanas, General Manager of the Northern Indiana Commuter Transportation District (NICTD) which operates the Chicago South Shore and South Bend Railroad.

### **3) Jerry Hanas, Northern Indiana Commuter Transportation District (NICTD)**

In his Powerpoint presentation, Mr. Hanas told the Commission that the NICTD runs 41 trains per day during the week and 21 trains per day on weekends and/holidays. NICTD runs 12,800 trains per year. Mr. Hanas told the Commission that there are 90 route miles between South Bend and the Randolph Street station in Chicago. NICTD is responsible for maintaining and improving 75 miles and Metra, a Chicago commuter railroad, owns and maintains 15 miles from the Kensington station to Randolph. There are 13 stations on the 90-mile route, with 151 grade crossings and 43 bridges. Mr. Hanas said that the NICTD trains have a top speed of 79 mph, with the capability to reach 90 mph. NICTD has 309 full-time employees, with 110 employees, or about 36% of the total, working in the mechanical area. In 1999, NICTD carried 3.5 million passengers, a 36-year record. Mr. Hanas also told the Commission that NICTD is facing significant capacity constraints to increasing peak-hour ridership.

In commenting about on-time performance, Mr. Hanas said that on-time performance has been hampered by the age of the rolling stock, the lack of spare equipment, and the age of the overhead catenary (wire).

Mr. Hanas next addressed the issue of operating costs and the funding of NICTD. Mr. Hanas said that labor and fringe benefits account for 61% of the total cost, with operating costs, which include trackage rights, materials, utilities, and services, amounting 24% of the total cost. Funding sources for NICTD are comprised of fare box revenue which amounts to 58% of the total, state contributions which amount to 15%, federal funds which amount to 12%, with contracts and other funding amounting to 15%. In a comparison with three other commuter railroads, Mr. Hanas said that NICTD had the lowest expense per mile (\$7.96) and the lowest expense per hour (\$280.54).

Mr. Hanas next addressed major investments of NICTD. Among other items, these major investments consist of new stations at Beverly Shores, South Bend, Hammond, Hegewisch, Dune Park/Chesterton, and the Randolph Street station in Chicago. Mr. Hanas then outlined the near term reinvestment program of NICTD for the years 2000-2005. This program included bridges, signals, rolling stock, stations, and other items. This near term investment programs totals \$166.1 million. Funding sources for this effort include the following:

Federal	\$ 73,900,000
State	\$ 6,500,000
NICTD	\$ 21,000,000
Unfunded*	<u>\$ 64,700,000</u>
Total	\$166,100,000

\*Unfunded NICTD is seeking alternative funding.

Before closing, Mr. Hanas identified the strategic objectives of NICTD. They are: enhance safety; improve reliability; increase capacity; reduce travel time; and improve passenger access.

The Chair then called upon Jim Ranfranz, Executive Director of the Northwestern Indiana Regional Planning Commission (NIRPC).

#### **4) Jim Ranfranz, Northwestern Indiana Regional Planning Commission (NIRPC)**

Mr. Ranfranz distributed the *Northwest Indiana Regional Transportation Plan-Vision 2020*. Mr. Ranfranz said that the NIRPC considered the results and analyses of all thirteen alternative transportation networks at its December 3, 1998, meeting. The NIRPC selected a combination of two alternatives presented at that meeting as the preferred alternative transportation network. Mr. Ranfranz told the Commission that preferred alternative transportation network incorporates all committed and previously selected transportation improvement projects.

Mr. Ranfranz said that the estimated cost to implement the preferred alternative transportation network is \$879.3 million which includes approximately \$34.5 million in commuter rail modernization projects, \$230.6 million in commuter rail service expansions, and \$6.5 million in fixed route bus service expansions. The estimated cost to implement the recommended highway system improvements includes \$113.2 million for local agency projects and \$489 million for INDOT projects.

Mr. Ranfranz introduced Holly Butcher of NIRPC. Ms. Butcher distributed a document entitled *Whatever Happened to That Project?* Ms. Butcher told the Commission that this document listed transportation projects implemented in 1999. She also said that the implementation span for most of the 213 projects was for calendar year 1999. Ms. Butcher said that projects on this list are in the *Fiscal Year 1999-2003 Transportation Improvement Program* (TIP) which was adopted by the NIRPC on February 11, 1999, and amended nine times. This document attempts to answer the question, "Which projects have been implemented?" The TIP is the official list of all federally funded transportation projects that have been selected by the NIRPC. These are highway, public transit, and transportation enhancement (mostly bicycle/pedestrian trails) projects.

Mr. Ranfranz introduced Jim Thorne, Transportation Planner of NIRPC. Mr. Thorne distributed a document entitled *Redesignation Proposal U.S. 6 to Ridge Road From S.R.51 to Burr Street*. Mr. Thorne told the Commission that this document details the benefits of this project. Mr. Thorne highlighted a few of the benefits. They are: a) reduces regional hydrocarbon emissions; b) traffic volumes on the Borman Expressway (Interstate 94) east of I-65 decrease with the proposed Ridge Road improvement; c) a continuous four lane Ridge Road provides relief to parallel secondary routes; d) average speeds increase on the improved section and the average system speed also increases (travel time decreases). Mr. Thorne told the Commission that the total cost for this project is \$22.3 million, with an 80% federal share, or approximately \$17.3 million, and a 20% local share, or about \$5.1 million.

Mr. Ranfranz introduced Belinda Petroskey of NIRPC. Ms. Petroskey addressed the Commission on regional transit needs. Ms. Petroskey distributed *Transit News An Update of Regional Transit Needs Analysis*. For Lake County, strategies were designed to meet the needs of urban travelers, while also providing new community-based services for residents of suburban and rural areas. Ms. Petroskey said that the individual strategies range in cost from about \$75,000 to \$375,000. The total package of improvements to fixed route services is expected to cost \$1.8 million in the first year of operation, while the local service strategies would cost \$1 million.

For Porter County, Ms. Petroskey said the strategies combine local and regional connections. This is to provide local mobility and regional connections through a combination of local routes and planned flexible services. The service strategies are expected to cost \$500,000 the first year.

Ms. Petroskey next addressed LaPorte County. She said that the strategies for LaPorte County focus on improving overall mobility for county residents and enhancing connections to Michigan City and LaPorte. The improvements to LaPorte County are expected to cost \$250,000.

The Commission discussed the possibility of writing a letter to the Indiana Congressional delegation requesting their support of the federal legislation addressing High Speed Rail. The Chair announced that the next Commission meeting will be on August 31, at 10:30 a.m., with the location to be announced. The Chair adjourned the meeting at 1:10 p.m.